

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

NOVEMBER 29, 2011

Proclaim World AIDS Day December 1, 2011 in Los Angeles County

Since the AIDS epidemic began in 1981, 1.7 million Americans have been infected with HIV. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that more than 1.3 million people are living with HIV in the United States. However, approximately 21 percent of those 1.3 million Americans living with HIV are unaware of their positive HIV status.

Nearly 200,000 Californians have reportedly contracted HIV AIDS and nearly 90,000 have died since the epidemic began in the early 1980s with 31,076 of those deaths in Los Angeles County alone. California ranks second in the nation to cumulative AIDS cases and there are up to 7,000 new HIV infections in the state every year.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health reported that by the end of December 2010, there were approximately 42,364 people living with HIV AIDS in the

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County of Los Angeles. Of the reported number, approximately 37,000 are male, 5,000 are female and 400 are transgender.

HIV AIDS has had a devastating impact on minorities, women and young people in the United States. Racial and ethnic minorities accounted for almost 71 percent of the newly diagnosed cases of HIV and AIDS and 73 percent of babies born with HIV AIDS belong to minority groups.

World AIDS Day is held on December 1 of each year and is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate people who have died of AIDS. World AIDS Day began in 1988 and was the first ever recognized global health day. Today, two major scientific advances have been made in HIV treatment: 1) the development of drugs that inhibit the virus's growth, preventing or delaying the onset of AIDS and allowing people living with HIV to remain free of symptoms longer; and 2) the development of medications that have shown promising results in reducing the transmission of the virus from an HIV-infected mother to her child. In addition, there are laws to protect people living with HIV and a better understanding about the condition. Despite these efforts, people do not know the facts about how to protect themselves and others from HIV, and stigma and discrimination remain a reality for many people living with HIV. World AIDS Day is important as it reminds the public and government that HIV has not gone away and there is still a vital need to raise money, increase awareness, fight prejudice and improve education.

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The Empowerment Congress of the Second District is engaging community leaders, community stakeholders, faith-based groups and elected officials to stop the spread of HIV AIDS and bring light to World AIDS Day.

In addition, Erasedoubt.org is bringing awareness and information on resources for the HIV AIDS epidemic to the residents of Los Angeles County. This program was established by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Office of AIDS Programs and Policy in 1985 to fight the epidemic in Southern California. For the past 26 years, the department has worked in concert with the CDC, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the California State Office of AIDS to prevent new infections and to provide treatment for people living with HIV AIDS. Today, through continuous community outreach, grassroots promotions, and multi-media advertising, the Countywide initiative called Erase Doubt aims to increase HIV testing in Los Angeles County, drive awareness of HIV prevention, and provide information about HIV AIDS care treatment resources.

THEREFORE, I MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Proclaim Thursday, December 1, 2011 as World AIDS Day throughout Los Angeles County and urge local residents, community stakeholders and County employees to support and participate in events planned on this day.

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